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SECOND
THOUGHTS

Concerning the *of Jesus Christ.*
Sufferings and Death of CHRIST,

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A PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE for the
SINS of the WORLD, and a SATIS-
FACTION to DIVINE JUSTICE.

by D. G. Henderson

*Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti, si non, his utere mecum.*

HOR. Ep.



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THOUGHTS

SECOND

Containing the

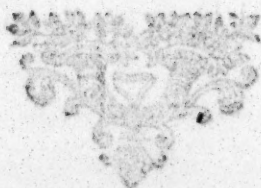
Sufferings and Death of Christ

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A TROBATORIAL SAGRICIAL THE
SINS OF THE WORLD, AND A SATIS-
FACTION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.



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SECOND THOUGHTS

Concerning the
Sufferings and Death of CHRIST.



VERY Reader will judge, according to his own sense of things, concerning the views and intentions of his Author. And, very often, views are found out for him, which were never in his thoughts, but the most distant from them imaginable. Nor is any Author, who concealeth his name, to expect that much regard should be paid to the strongest declarations concerning his real purpose. For, what credit is to be given to a person unknown? All therefore that I can reasonably

desire of the Reader upon the present occasion, is, that whatever he may imagine concerning my intentions, he will give himself leave to weigh the arguments laid before him, deliberately and with candor. And if the real design of this paper, is to propose to the friends of christianity, some difficulties, which have grievously pressed my own mind, in a point which hath been thought to be of great importance, that by some candid hand they may be removed; or, to procure more satisfying answers to some objections, which after all that hath been said to them, seem to retain some force; by which means the true interest of that religion may be promoted: This will justify the attempt in that judgment, into which only intentions can be brought.

It was spoken in prophecy concerning our Saviour; "*He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed: That the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all: That Messiah the Prince should be cut off, and bring in an everlasting righteousness: with other things to the same purpose.*"

When *John* the Baptist, his glorious Harbinger, appeared, He pointed him out as the *Lamb of God, who should take away the sin*

fin of the world. Our Lord himself says, that He gives his life for the sheep; that the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many; and that his blood was shed for the remission of sin. And his apostles speak the same language. " Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." That God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past — that He might be just, and the justifier of him, who believeth in Jesus. That he hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour. That He (i. e. God) hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. That he was made a curse for us; That he bare our sins in his own body on the tree; That he hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God: And use many other expressions of the same kind, applying to the death of Christ the phraseology used in the Old Testament concerning sacrifices; which subject is very much enlarged upon in the epistle to the Hebrews. Now, to omit many things asserted by divines, who have carried this matter of a proper satisfaction to the justice

justice of God very high, the sense of the more moderate seemeth to be this, that the sufferings and death of Christ were properly penal, that he really suffered for the sins of the world, and that God accepted these sufferings as satisfaction to justice, as an honourable equivalent for the punishment which sinners deserved; so that upon true repentance they might be forgiven, consistently with the honor of the divine government, and the ends and purposes of a perfect moral administration.

But that we may judge rightly in this matter, it will be requisite to attend to some principles which are evidently true, and to the necessary consequences of them, which bear a near relation to the subject.

It is obvious, that the moral state and character, as that is denominated good or bad from the sum of all past actions, all desires or dispositions of mind, or which are actually present, is unalterable by any power whatsoever. For what is past, cannot be recalled; and what hath been, or is, cannot be otherwise than it hath been, or is; for this is absolutely impossible.

It will likewise be universally acknowledged, that the intire scene of the life of every individual moral Agent, comprehending all his actions and principles of action, all his dispositions and desires, appears to the supreme, omniscient Being, as it really is.

But

But we know that "*the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.*" God is perfectly and unchangeably righteous, and good, and pure ; consequently, loveth righteousness, and goodness and purity ; and is displeased with all unrighteousness of men. And as He is himself a *Moral Agent*, so He acts the part of a *Moral Governor* ; is attentive to the Conduct of every individual, as the subject of his *Moral Kingdom*, and accordingly is affected towards him. What is good, as a perfect moral Agent, and moral Governor, he necessarily loves and approves ; what is evil, he necessarily disapproves, and is displeased with it.

From this it follows, that the divine favor and approbation, or disapprobation and displeasure, must follow men according to their real moral character, and that only : it is necessarily determined by the moral state of the individual. Nothing without a man can affect his state in the least with respect to the approbation and love of God. For as the object of these is moral worth and goodness, and that only ; so it is self-evident, that nothing but moral worth and goodness can procure them. Nor can any thing but immorality cut us off from them, or render us the objects of divine displeasure.

Hence, it is a plain inference, that if a man's state is changed with respect to the favor or displeasure of his maker ; it must
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be owing to a change in his moral character only. He, who hath been wicked, and so the object of divine displeasure, cannot be put into a state of favor and approbation, but by becoming good and worthy. Nothing else can possibly do it. And supposing a man hath been good and worthy; but should become wicked, this must render him the object of divine displeasure, and this only. For the object of favor or displeasure being the real moral character, by which that favor or displeasure are necessarily determined, there can be no change in a man's state with respect to that favor or displeasure, but what is the effect of a change in his character.

There is not any character in human life unmixed or perfect; yet some are eminently good and worthy: and from these the highest and most finished characters of mankind, there is a vast variety of degree in the moral worth of individuals, down to the lowest, which may be called good, as good and worthy principles have really the ascendant: And, as this is the case, so the love and approbation of the supreme Being must be in proportion to the real worth of the several individuals. And by parity of reason, as there is a great variety of degree in the wickedness of those, who, in general, may be called wicked, or workers of iniquity, because bad dispositions and affections have the ascendant

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in them, and are productive of bad actions in their lives; so, the displeasure of the Supreme Being towards the several individuals, must be in proportion to the degree of their wickedness.

And as the moral state and character is unchangeable (that is, in the sense mentioned above;) And the favor or displeasure of God, towards the individual, must be according to it; no act of God, as a Judge, can possibly affect either, so as to alter it. No judicial act can make a character more or less worthy than it really is, or alter the appearance of it in the divine eye, or the degree of favor or displeasure which is proportioned to it.

The sentence which God will pronounce, at last, upon every individual, is most naturally to be understood as the expression of his favor or displeasure towards men, according as their works have been.

All communication of personal worth or merit is impossible: and indeed amounts to a contradiction in terms. God cannot see me to have the worth I have not, more than he can see me to be what I am not. I can no more have the worth of another person communicated to me, than I can have his character communicated to me, and be affected and act, as I am not affected, and do not act.

Nor can I be beloved and approved by the Supreme Being, on account of the worth of another person. For no man can be beloved

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of God, who is not in himself the proper object of Love. This is plain from the very idea of Love, which is an affection towards an object arising only from the discerned beauty and amiableness of the object itself, and which cannot possibly be excited otherwise.

I can have no notion of any constitution, of which God is the Author, in which happiness to the individual shall not follow his favor and approbation: or, in which the person, whom God loves, shall be miserable, and his existence prove real unhappiness to him. On the contrary, the love and approbation of God, and a sense of it upon the mind, are in their own nature sources of high happiness. And therefore, as the love of God, and his favor follow true worth in proportion to the degree of it, so happiness must follow the love and favor of God: as unhappiness to the individual must follow his displeasure.

These principles appear to me to be evidently just. If the reader should have a doubt concerning any of them, let him try how a proposition directly contradictory to that of which he questions the truth, will sound, and probably he will be convinced.

But from these principles we have a full answer to the most important of all inquiries, namely, what will render us the objects of God's favor and approbation? And from them,

them, likewise, it evidently follows, that no sacrifice whatsoever, or by whomsoever offered, can have any immediate influence or causality in putting us into a state of favor and approbation with God.

I would only farther observe to the Reader, that I have all along taken the *Love* and *Favor* of God, in the strict and proper sense, as individual moral Agents are the objects of it. There is a desire of the Father of all, to the works of his hand ; there is a merciful regard to a corrupted and lost world, in which the children of men are not distinguished according to their moral characters ; but the means of grace and salvation are afforded to all. This may in a large sense be called *Love* ; but is quite different from that favor and approbation of God as a moral Governor, of which only I have been speaking.

But let us now proceed to consider the subject in another light.

God, as the Governor of the world, hath given laws to his creatures, and enforced them with proper sanctions of rewards and punishments. The person, who breaks his Law, becomes obnoxious to his Justice. And, it hath been said, that to serve the ends and purposes of a moral administration, it is necessary that punishment should be inflicted : that Justice demands this, and that

therefore without shedding of blood there is no remission. The following observations may perhaps contribute to our understanding this matter aright.

It is not possible to blot out of the mind the sense of merit and demerit. But, when we come to consider, by what rule the measure of reward and punishment is to be adjusted, we seem to be utterly at a loss. The mind here is without any fixed standard. We are very sensible, that if one sin deserves such a particular measure of suffering, as punishment; a greater sin deserves a greater measure. And if one good work is worthy of being rewarded with such a measure of happiness; a work, which is far more excellent, deserves to be rewarded with a greater measure. But what a virtuous action, as such, deserves; and what punishment a vicious action, as such, and absolutely considered, (as they speak in the schools) deserves, we cannot say.

But when it is inquired, why a good action should be rewarded, and a sinful one punished; the answer is taken from the fitness of the thing, and the use of it, as a means of preventing vice and evil, of reclaiming the vitious, of strengthening in men good dispositions and resolutions, and so of promoting the moral perfection and happiness of the creation of God. The fitness of it evidently appeareth from these ends, which

which are answered by it. And if we were to suppose, that no such ends could be answered by punishment, it would be hard to give a reason, why it should be inflicted at all.

We plainly perceive, that when we see a criminal action done, dislike of it, and disapprobation do *necessarily* arise in good minds. These prevent all deliberation, and arise naturally and unavoidably from our very frame. But when it is in our power to punish, we are not, in the same manner, necessarily determined to inflict punishment. And when we do it, if we act a right part, and which our deliberate thoughts will approve; we consider, in what manner, and in what measure, it will answer the best ends; and by these are determined. Hence it appears, that though dislike and disapprobation of a bad action are absolutely necessary, yet punishment may not be so.

The sole reason, why a propitiatory sacrifice, which shall be an honorable equivalent for the punishment in strict justice due to the sins of mankind, is supposed to be necessary, is, that God could not otherwise, consistently with justice and the honor of his moral government, receive sinners into favor, however penitent, however reformed. For this reason, he gave his only begotten Son to be a propitiation for the sins of the world.

Now,

Now, this evidently supposes it possible, that justice may have a demand, which the most sincere repentance and reformation of sinners, though these certainly render them the objects of divine favor and approbation, cannot satisfy. In other words, it supposeth, if possible, that persons, who are the objects of divine favor and approbation, shall be obnoxious to his justice, and may perish. For, were it not for the supposed demands of justice, no reason can be assigned, why happiness should not follow the favor of God towards a sincere penitent, and his approbation, as well and fully, without an expiation as with it. If then an expiation is necessary that happiness may follow the favor and approbation of God, it is possible, that persons might be the objects of God's favor and approbation, and yet be unhappy in suffering the stroke of his justice. For there is evidently no connection in nature between that repentance and reformation, which renders a penitent sinner the object of divine favor, and the expiation of guilt by a sacrifice quite independent of this repentance, and acknowledged to be quite out of the sinner's power. This appears to me a most insuperable difficulty. Can it be demonstrated, that there is any thing in the nature of divine justice, which makes it necessary, that misery should be inflicted upon a person, even suppose that person as a most sincere penitent,

tent, is the object of divine favor? And if justice in God is only goodness, acting under the direction of wisdom, what is best for the good of the creation, which is probably the clearest, as well as most honorable idea of it; can it be imagined, that wisdom and goodness require the condemnation of persons, who are the objects of God's favor?

Another difficulty arises from the representations of that severity of justice, which makes an expiation necessary. Some have taught that every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this world, and that which is to come; that, it is an infinite evil, and requires a satisfaction of infinite value; and, that God could not pardon any sin without a satisfaction. This is what men, who are in the highest scheme, have taught. And as far as others go into the necessity of such an expiation, they approach to it. Such a severity shocks my imagination. I cannot reconcile it to infinite Goodness. God hath, by his absolute and sovereign power, and without any agency of my own, placed me in a state, in which I am told, and I find it fact, that I come short of my duty in many instances, and offend daily; and that I never shall be able to maintain a perfect innocence, far less could I do it from the first beginnings of my moral agency. And yet, even for the unavoidable infirmities and sins of such a state, I am liable to the wrath
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and curse of God for ever; and cannot escape them, but by an expiation, which is not at all in my power. This one might dread from a malevolent Being; but is not to be expected under the administration of the original, essential, perfect, and unchangeable Goodness, which gave birth to the universe, with an intention of communicating happiness to the creatures in it. If I am told by way of answer to this, "that man was made upright, and capable of a perfect obedience to all the laws of God, but that this capacity was lost by our first parents to themselves and their posterity; that, from them a corrupted nature is derived to all their posterity, and that thus only they become impotent, and incapable of a perfect obedience, so that the blame is not at all to be imputed to the divine administration." The reply is ready, that it is just the same thing to me, whether the Creator's sovereign power hath placed me in this state as a descendant of *Adam*; or placed me in it, by an immediate creation of me out of the earth. For undoubtedly, I have as little agency in the one case, as in the other; am equally passive in both. And it would have been as fully consistent with the goodness of my Maker, to have made me what I originally am, out of the earth, as to make me what I am as a descendant from *Adam*.

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Another difficulty, which presseth this scheme, is this, that as merit or demerit cannot possibly be transferred from one person to another, so the punishment of sin cannot be transferred. There can be no vicegerency in this. For what is the punishment of sin? It is certainly either the natural unhappy fruit of it, in the pains of an accusing conscience, and other miserable and unavoidable effects; or in pains and penalties which are inflicted by the justice of God, the immediate effects of his wrath and curse, and *suffered as such*, which giveth them the most grievous sting. Now a person perfectly innocent, and who was infinitely pleasing to God, could suffer nothing of this kind. Innocence may be put to grievous pain and suffering: but innocence can never be *punished*, because it cannot have this sense of suffering. Perfect innocence can know no pains of conscience. Perfect innocence can have no apprehension of the wrath and displeasure of God. And it is not too bold to say, that whatever our Blessed Saviour endured, it must be of a kind infinitely different from this, and no wise to be compared with it. Pains of body, and distress of mind, may rise to a degree beyond all that we have any idea of; but be these distresses what they will, while a person is conscious of perfect innocence, and of the unchangeable and infinite love of the Father to him,

his sensations must be quite different from those of a person, who knows that he suffers under the wrath and curse of God : just as different as the sensations of one who knows he is in a most happy state, from those of one who knows he is utterly wretched. Some Divines, who have been aware of this difficulty pressing their scheme, have endeavoured to remove it, by asserting things concerning the sufferings and death of Christ, which are not only impossible, but which cannot be mentioned without horror.

And after all which hath been said in defence of it, it appeareth inconceivable, that the ends of a moral administration should be answered, by punishing an innocent person for the guilt of the wicked. It hath been alleged, that our Lord did voluntarily offer himself to be our substitute ; that it was his own act and deed ; that therefore there was no unrighteousness towards him ; while, at the same time, the severity of the divine administration appeared most tremendous. But this doth not satisfy. All was evidently by the appointment of the Father, though willingly submitted to by the Son. " He
 " came down from heaven not to do his
 " own will, but the will of him, who sent
 " him. I have glorified thee on the earth :
 " I have finished the work, which thou
 " gavest me to do. God so loved the world,
 " that he gave his only begotten Son, that
 " who-

“ whosoever believeth in him, should not
 “ perish, but have everlasting life.” No
 man will say, that the Father had no
 thoughts of grace or mercy to the children
 of men, ’till the interposition of the Son
 procured them. For this interposition of the
 Son, and all which hath followed upon it, is
 the effect of the original goodness of the
 Father, and of the counsels of his grace;
 and so the matter is constantly represented in
 the holy scriptures. Now, that the Father
 should inflict upon the Son the punishment
 due to sinners, and that the guilty should
 escape, appears not to be a method of an-
 swering the ends of government, but of evad-
 ing them.

Let us suppose it a thing possible (as it
 plainly was, if the matter was intirely volun-
 tary, and he was under no moral obligation)
 that Jesus Christ should not have been wil-
 ling to become our substitute, or surety, in
 this amazing and most important of all af-
 fairs. In that case, no man can say, that it
 would have been equitable, or that the ends
 of a moral administration would have been
 answered, by inflicting this punishment upon
 him. And if so, how could his willing
 submission to the Father alter the case, with
 respect to the ends of government? It will
 be confessed, that the Father’s giving him
 up without a willing compliance could not
 have answered these ends. And doth a

voluntary submission to the Father's will so alter the case, as to answer them? It was the Father's appointment; and the Son's submitting, or not submitting, doth not alter the matter, with respect to the purposes of moral government. Let us hear himself in the very crisis of this affair; "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." These words are so plain, as to need no commentary. Here was a most pleasing submission to the will of the Father, notwithstanding all the reluctancies of nature. But here was certainly an appointment of the Father, to which this submission was yielded: upon which appointment all relied. So the difficulty still remains, how it can answer the ends of a moral administration to lay the punishment, which a sinner hath deserved, upon the innocent.

But having mentioned the relation of the death of Christ, considered as a satisfaction to the justice of God, to the ends of government: I would farther observe, that as great stress is laid upon this, as what above all other events answers these ends, and hath the greatest possible tendency to beget, in the minds of the subjects, dreadful apprehensions of sin, as an infinite evil, the utmost fear of offend-

offending, the most earnest endeavors to avoid whatever may expose men to the severity of divine justice, and the most engaging sentiments of the love and goodness of God ; I say, as great stress is laid upon it, so one would expect, that a matter of such importance in the divine Oeconomy, of such importance to every individual subject, and which is intended to make the deepest impressions upon every heart, should be so plain and level to every capacity, that no man could be at any loss in receiving it as truth ; that there should not be the least difficulty attending it ; nothing to obstruct the embracing of it in the most cordial manner. But when we find it is not so ; but that the opinion is involved in very great difficulties, and such as the minds of many cannot get over, it is a strong presumption, that the ends of government are not so much concerned in it, and that it cannot be of so much moment in the kingdom of God.

Add to this another important inquiry, namely, what is the fruit and effect of this satisfaction, which our Blessed Saviour gave to the justice of God for the sins of the world ? Is it an indemnity to the world ? No man says this. Yet if justice had full satisfaction, in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, for the sins of the world, it is what I should have expected. For, surely, if words have any meaning, where justice is
fully

fully satisfied for a criminal, no more punishment is to be apprehended from a righteous judge. And when we speak of justice and law, and of pains and penalties, I can easily conceive a mere indemnity procured from these, where the pardoned criminal (pardoned, I mean so far as a mere indemnity goeth) is not received into favor and love. But even such an indemnity to the world is not pretended to be the effect of our Saviour's sufferings. All that is pleaded, is, that men, upon true repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ, shall be pardoned, And by this pardon is not meant a state of mere indemnity, but taking men into the favor and love of God. Now, it hath been shewn, that our Saviour's offering himself a sacrifice can have no immediate influence at all upon putting men into a state of favor with God. All that is left, then, to be the fruit of it, is a mere indemnity. And as this is never meant by *pardon* in scripture, so it is an advantage, which the impenitent world doth not receive. Justice (at least, as most Divines teach) is satisfied for all; and yet all who are impenitent, must satisfy justice personally in their own sufferings. Is this an administration worthy of God? How can justice have received a full satisfaction, and yet satisfaction is to be made again, as if there had been no satisfaction at all? And as to those, who by faith and obedience

obedience are prepared for receiving pardon, if their offences have been fully satisfied for, and a punishment every way equal to them actually borne, in what sense can this pardon be said to be free? To them, indeed, it is free, but on the part of the Father, considered as a moral Governor, it can in no sense be said to be so. Nothing is given freely, where the full price is paid.

Let it be added, that to plain sense it hath a strange appearance, that a person shall be put into a state of suffering properly penal, and dreadfully so, which shall issue in an advancement to the very highest dignity, glory, and happiness, in the creation of God. He shall have the punishment of a guilty world laid upon him, and this shall be the means of his being exalted beyond all expression, beyond all imagination! Hath this in reality the nature of punishment?

After all, could it be proved that there is any thing in the divine nature, or in the thing itself, any expediency amounting to a moral necessity, which should render it unfit or impossible for God to forgive any, even the least sin, upon sincere repentance, without such a satisfaction, all that hath been said, must be given up. But I really despair of seeing that proved.

Thus I have given a plain and candid account of the difficulties which have pressed my own mind with respect to this great point,

point, and without using any words, but what seemed necessary to explain to the reader my meaning.

But is not this vicarious punishment plainly declared in the passages of scripture above-mentioned? I answer, if these passages are taken in a strictly proper and literal sense, it is certainly so. But the sense in which they are to be taken, is a matter which will admit of debate. We see that the phraseology used in the *Old Testament* with respect to expiatory sacrifices is, in the *New*, applied to the sufferings and death of our Saviour. But as expiatory sacrifices are appointed in the *Old Testament*, so they are introduced without any particular and professed explanation of the design of them, but indeed, rather as what the *Israelites* had been before acquainted with. And we see that there must be a great latitude allowed, in the interpretation of the phrases used concerning them. When any person had sinned through ignorance, or was guilty in such sort that the law admitted an expiation, he brought his sin-offering to the priest, and laid his hand on the head of it; then the victim was killed, and the blood, by which the atonement was made, put, some of it upon the horns of the altar, and the rest poured out at the bottom of it. Upon some particular occasions, the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled before the veil, and put upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense,

incense, and so the pardon of the penitent sinner was declared. These rites, as some judicious authors have observed, may be considered as a kind of language. Here was a solemn confession of sin, and likewise of what it deserved; and an offering to be made by the transgressor before his pardon was declared by the priest, who had authority to do it. But we find that sin-offerings were to be made in cases where men were unfortunate, indeed, but might be perfectly innocent; as in the case of the leprosie, and many ceremonial impurities, which were quite unavoidable; and, where to speak of a propitiation, in the general sense, in which that word is taken, would be quite absurd. Nay, we read of cleansing houses by the sprinkling of the blood of birds upon them, and of *making attonement* for them.

Farther, it is worthy of notice, that on the day of the yearly expiation, a most solemn day with the *Jews*, the scape-goat, upon which the priest was to put his hand, and to confess over it all the iniquities of the children of *Israel*, and all their sins, and to put them upon the head of the goat, was not slain at all, but let go into the wilderness, and is said to carry all their iniquities into a land not inhabited. What can this be, but an emblem of solemn repentance on the part of the people, and of pardon on God's part? We cannot very certainly know

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how the *Jews* understood these things. But we know very well, their sins were not put upon the head of the goat, nor did the goat carry them away. And it cannot be imagined, that any understanding *Jew* could think it did. But we may evidently see the expressions are to be taken, not in a strict and literal sense, but in a great latitude. I do not care to detain the reader with more instances for the illustration of this, though several might be given, - and which will readily offer themselves to the thoughts of persons who are conversant in these matters.

All that I infer, is, that such phrases might be used by the sacred writers of the *New Testament*, which were never intended to be taken in the strictest sense. And this naturally leads us to consider, whether what we know concerning the sufferings and death of our blessed Lord, without going into any thing shocking to reason, may not be understood to be signified by such expressions, and to come up to the real meaning of them.

As to the fact, that the son of God in flesh suffered the painful and infamous death of the cross; that he had inexpressible agony in his mind at the very apprehension of it; that he was in such a state when on the cross as to cry, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" That notwithstanding his perfect innocence and purity, his consciousness

ness that he was the object of the Father's greatest and unchangeable love : his full assurance that his sufferings should end in the highest possible advancement and glory ; notwithstanding the unspeakable greatness and firmness of his mind, the important station he held, and the matchless service he was performing in the creation of God, he suffered such distress, is what all are agreed in, who believe the history of the Bible.

It is likewise perfectly plain, that the corruption and guilt of the world was the sole occasion of the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Redeemer, and of the whole astonishing plan of the kingdom of Messiah, the kingdom of grace.

Nor will any believer doubt, that the obedience of our Blessed Saviour, even to the death of the cross, was the event of all which ever did, or ever shall, come to pass in the whole course of divine providence, most pleasing to the Father. “ *He offered himself without spot to God, an offering and sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor.*” And no sacrifice ever was, or can be like it.

In pursuance of this he was advanced to be the head of the church, and of the administration of the grace of God ; was invested with authority to forgive sin, and to confer all those favors and blessings, which the subjects of his kingdom enjoy, and particularly to open the glorious prospect of immor-

tality, assuring his servants, that in him they
 should have eternal life. I say, it was in
 pursuance of his sufferings and death, which
 the wisdom of the divine counsels for excel-
 lent purposes appointed, and so made neces-
 sary, he was thus advanced. So that really
 the declared remission of sin upon the terms
 of repentance, all the gifts of the holy spi-
 rit, and all other advantages and privileges
 which we enjoy, may be considered as fruits
 and effects of the sufferings and death of our
 Saviour. For whatever we enjoy under the
 administration of Messiah's kingdom, is cer-
 tainly the fruit of that sacrifice of himself,
 which according to the counsels of God,
 was the foundation of it, and upon which
 the whole wondrous structure rests. Be-
 cause "*he humbled himself, and became obe-*
dient unto death, even the death of the cross;
therefore God also hath highly exalted him.
Ought not Christ to have suffered these things,
and to enter into his glory? For the suffering
of death, he was crowned with glory and
honor." In this method, it pleased God the
 Father to dispense his grace: but, particu-
 larly, the remission of sin, which Christ, as
 a son, declareth in his own house. "*Be it*
known unto you, men and brethren, that
through this man is preached unto you,
the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that
believe are all justified from all things, from
which ye could not be justified by the law of
 Moses."

Moses." There were presumptuous sins, for which the Law of *Moses* allowed no expiation, nor any hope of pardon : but pardon is declared to all true penitents by our Lord Jesus Christ. In a word, in pursuance of our Saviour's offering himself a sacrifice according to the counsels of the Father, he hath received authority to forgive sin, to assure us of eternal life, and to confer all those gifts of divine favor and grace, which are necessary to serve the purposes of our salvation. To ask, why the Father chose to dispense his favor and grace to the children of men in this method, is, perhaps, an inquiry too high for us. We may rest assured, that "*it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*" Though we cannot assign all the reasons, some of them we can very plainly discern. Nothing could set the importance of mankind, and their happiness in the divine estimation, in such a strong and affecting light, as the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the son of God, and the glorious kingdom with which he is invested. Nothing can give us such elevated sentiments of our future glory, as our being taught, that we shall be where Christ is ; that we shall have communion with him in happiness, so far as we are capable ; that his
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servants are joint-heirs with him in the kingdom ; that they shall enter into his joy ; that it is his will, they should be where he is, and behold his glory. Again, we see that the highest honor is done to a suffering state by our Saviour ; and that the person, in the whole universe, most beloved of God, and in the highest and happiest station was, in his external appearances and lot, most unfortunate ; which is the most convincing and affecting confutation of the wisdom of this world, and of all the sentiments of the spirit of it. We have, likewise, the noblest pattern of obedience, and of patience and resignation in suffering, set before us. We have a most glorious seal to the truth of the gospel. And we see death triumphed over by a resurrection to glory and immortality. Finally, by the offering of our Saviour once for all, we have an end for ever put to all those vain sacrifices, which could not take away sin.

These important ends of this wondrous dispensation we can discern. But there may be ends answered by it, which are beyond our conception at present. And we may rest in this, that the method which the wisdom of God hath taken, amongst many other methods ; which, for ought we know, or the holy scriptures have declared, might have been taken, for dispensing his grace to the world, is unquestionably the best : and that

that the purpose for which it is taken is of importance proportionable to it.

But if, in truth, the degeneracy and corruption of mankind were the sole original occasion and cause of this astonishing train of events, the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God ; if his offering himself a sacrifice to serve the most important ends, was thus, above all other events, pleasing to the Father ; if in pursuance of this, as a most essential part of the great plan, he was invested with authority to forgive sin, and confer upon us all the privileges and advantages we enjoy under his administration ; if this, I say, be a just representation of the case, we may find in it a very important meaning to the expressions of the *New Testament*, concerning the sufferings and death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, especially considering the latitude, in which, it is evident, these expressions were intended to be, and in some passages evidently must be, taken. This hath been observed already. But the Reader, who wants to be fully instructed in it, may consult Mr. *Taylor's* commentary upon the *Romans*, a book written with a noble design, and which is executed with great diligence, fidelity, and success.

But, to enter into this argument a little more particularly ; may not our Saviour be called “ the *Lamb of God*, the *sacrifice*,
which

which taketh away the sin of the world," seeing his sufferings and death were really caused by our sins, and in pursuance of these sufferings a full remission is declared? Did he not die for us? Die that we might live; that the glorious dispensation might be introduced, in which eternal life is insured to his servants. May it not be said, in a very intelligible sense, that he was bruised for our transgressors, that he was wounded for our sins, nay, that he bore our sins in his own body, in as much as the corruption and sins of the world were the sole occasion of this amazing event, which was the great and essential step appointed by the wisdom of God to the declared remission of them? He suffered for them, and by suffering, bore them away. In the same sense, *his body was broken for us, his blood was shed for the remission of sin, and he gave his life a ransom for many.* Then they were, indeed, *ransomed*, when the foundations were laid for the kingdom of grace, under which they are absolved from guilt. Is it at all improper, that our Saviour's offering himself should be considered as the great *propitiation*, by which an end is put to all sacrifices, seeing by this channel, mercy and peace flow to mankind. Is it not an honor, of which the Saviour is worthy, that in pursuance of his offering himself a sacrifice, the power of pardoning sin, and conferring all gifts of divine

vine grace, should be conferred upon him?

“ *All power is given unto me in Heaven,
“ and in Earth.*”

It ought to be observed here, that we see the great plan of *Messiah's* kingdom running through the whole scriptures of the *Old* and *New Testament*. It is the subject of very many prophecies, and introduced by a long train of most extraordinary, and some of them miraculous events and interpositions of providence. The sufferings and death of our Saviour were the most essential part of this plan, and it becomes his disciples ever to consider it as the most important of all events. So it certainly may be considered without going into any of those sentiments concerning it, which occasion the difficulties already mentioned, and which, after much serious inquiry and deliberation, appear to me unsurmountable. The believing mind will have the same honor for the Redeemer, will be as much sensible of the obligations we are under to him, and prepared to ascribe to Him the privileges and advantages we enjoy under his kingdom, as much, as if he had, by his death, given a real and proper satisfaction for sin, and bore the punishment of it. For the advantages are as great to us, and the love of our Saviour must be considered as being as great, in whatever particular light his sufferings and death are considered. Whether he suffered and died as a proper propitiation

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or not, and as bearing the punishment of our sins or not, his sufferings and death, his love to us, the privileges and advantages we enjoy, and the honor put upon him, are all the same. The light, in which I have endeavoured to set this whole matter, maketh not the least difference in any of these things. But by it we avoid some notions, which occasion very great difficulty, and give a handle to the adversaries of the Christian faith, of which they have made great use.

Notions they are, not at all favoured by the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, concerning the terms of our acceptance with God. No man, who reads our Lord's discourses, as they are recorded in the *New Testament*, with attention, but must see, that true rectitude of spirit, and sincere obedience of life, are declared by him necessary for our acceptance. And that nothing can be substituted in the room of this, which will answer the end. No one but must see, that the tendency of his whole doctrine is to rivet this in the minds of men, and to convince them, that their being admitted into the kingdom of heaven is suspended upon true holiness. In some remarkable parables, where he represents his future procedure in the day of judgment, as well as in other places, where he professedly fixes the terms of our acceptance, he speaks this language in the strongest manner, and puts it beyond question,

question, that all men shall receive according to their works. And his Apostles, however full of a sense of the riches of pardoning mercy and grace, and of the redemption which is in Christ, speak in the same strain with their Lord, and assure us in the plainest terms, that we shall be judged according to our works; that every man shall receive according to his deeds, whether they have been good or evil; that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; that it is by a patient continuance in well-doing we are to seek after glory, honor, and immortality; and that to them, who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath are in reserve." This is not the language of men, who thought that any thing could be substituted in the room of true holiness, which would avail for our acceptance with God. But I shall not farther insist upon this; for all, who are acquainted with the holy scriptures, must be perfectly satisfied about it.

Thus I have written, constrained by the evidences of Truth. Once exceedingly zealous for the opinions I have been now arguing against, and persuaded of the utmost importance of them. In consequence of which I have found a reluctance against parting with them, which nothing, but the appearances of truth to my mind, could have overcome. But as I am at present convinced in
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my judgment, that I was wrong, so I have fairly represented the arguments, by which I have been convinced. And if any candid person will deign to answer this short paper, and overthrow these arguments, so that I find myself obliged to return to my former way of thinking, I shall still be satisfied, and publish my grateful acknowledgments to the Author, having nothing in view, but *Truth*. If he doth not give a satisfactory answer, I shall defend this paper in the best manner I can. But if any shall think fit, instead of entering candidly into the argument, to raise loud cries of heresie, and of attempts to overthrow the religion of Christ altogether, I shall be content to enjoy in silence the sincerity of my own intentions, which, though it cannot be known to others, is well known to myself.

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